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INTERACTION COUNCIL

STATEMENT BY

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Statement of Mr. Jose Sarney of Brazil
on the Report on Bringing Africa Back to
the Mainstream of the International System
Friday, May 14, 1993

Mr. Chairman, Members of the InterAction Council:

In relation to the report of the high level working group which examined the question of how to bring Africa back to the mainstream of the international system, I wish to refer to an issue which is worthy of the attention of the international community - an issue which the report, because of its comprehensive approach, understandably failed to mention, but which, nevertheless, does deserve to be the object of an expression of interest on the part of this organization. I refer to the civil war which is now raging in Angola, a country to which Brazil is deeply linked by cultural and historical ties, as well as by geographical proximity.

What now happens in Angola constitutes a specially serious problem. The international community cannot remain in an attitude of silence or indifference to that problem. In that African country a renewed civil war is provoking the loss of thousands of lifes and the destruction of whole cities and regions.

As a former President of Brazil - which was the very first country to recognize the new Angolan nation, in November 1975 -, I remember vividly the joy which overtook that noble people, in June 1991, when the peace agreements between the MPLA and UNITA were signed. It was then hoped that those agreements, which had been sponsored by the United States and the then USSR, would come to stay, thus enabling the country to reach national reconciliation and economic recovery.

Today, unfortunately, that brief optimism about the future of Angola is disappearing amidst a maelstrom of chaos and violence.

The analysis of the problem of the marginalization of Africa over the past few years will not be complete without a reference to the devastating effects which the Cold War had over the region.

The struggle of many African countries for their independence was deeply marked by the bipolar confrontation which was then going on. With the changes which recently occurred in the international situation, and the overcoming of that period of East-West tension, some conflicts which were fed by that confrontation have been forgotten. This is, quite clearly, the case with Angola.

The search for a worldwide context of peace and security should not therefore be circumscribed to the efforts to avoid the emergence of new conflicts like those of ethnic origins which are making themselves felt in various parts of the world. It is also necessary to put an end to conflicts which are still pending. The importance which is justifiably attributed to other regions must

not lead to an overlooking of issues like that of the atrocious Angolan civil war.

The numbers of the destruction now going on in that country are impressive. In five months of fighting, there has been more devastation than that which occurred in the first sixteen years of the conflict. The number of dead raises to 20,000; 3 million people had to abandon their homes; prosperous cities are being razed. There is the risk that famine will befall the country.

In September last year, the Angolan people chose its government and its parliament in elections which were supervised by the United Nations, and which international observers considered democratic, free and fair. I believe that at this point in time the InterAction Council, thanks to the prestige it enjoys, can exert an important role in calling the world's attention to the horrors that are happening in Angola. I think it is necessary specifically to call on the United Nations to spare no effort in the search for an end to the conflict and in granting humanitarian assistance to the Angolan people.

It would also be appropriate to indicate to the United States of America the desirability of an early recognition of the government of Luanda, which today is legitimated by its evolution towards political pluralism and by the popular vote which it obtained.

I would also like to mention here another question which, although distant from the African continent, is no less worthy of international attention. I refer to what is occurring in East Timor, another territory to which Brazil is linked by the community of language and culture.

As President of the Republic, I had the opportunity a few years ago to express the concerns of the Brazilian government and people over this question in a speech I made to the General Assembly of the United Nations. The Timorese problem continues to provoke preoccupation, given the violations of the human rights of the local population. The international community must support the people of East Timor in their efforts to have their human rights respected. They must also be entitled to preserve the inalienable singularity of their culture and their historical formation.

Thank you very much.